

## **Kurdistan Chronicle** **New Opera Brings Kurdish Poetry to Holland Festival**

[Wladimir van Wilgenburg](#)

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On June 11, Qaqnas, a new opera, was performed at the Holland Festival in Amsterdam. Composer Huba de Graaff, Dutch-Kurdish pop singer, producer, and writer Naaz, and four female musicians took part in the production.

Qaqnas uses the full Kurdish text of the poem of the same title written by Tarza Jaff; Naaz sings the original version but also presents an English translation to make the content more accessible to the audience, the NRC [reported](#).

The performance combines electronic music, household sounds, and live vocal work around the theme of “freedom for women,” inspired by the Kurdish slogan Jin, Jiyan, Azadî (“Woman, Life, Freedom”)

“It was incredible to sing beautiful and eloquent Kurdish poetry over modern opera melodies. As a diaspora Kurdish Faili and Sorani woman, born in The Netherlands, conveying Tarza Jaff’s message at the prestigious Holland Festival felt like a great step in Kurdish international arts,” Naaz told Kurdistan Chronicle. “The Dutch and international audience seemed captivated by the language and the collision of worlds, combining opera, Kurdish poetry, and experimental modern music.”

“Everything came as a surprise to me because I had no prior expectations about what the opera would be like,” Jaff told Kurdistan Chronicle. “It turned out to be a very pleasant surprise. The production was of an exceptionally high standard, and the audience seemed to consist largely of Dutch intellectual and cultural elites.

“What surprised me most, however, was something beyond the performance itself. I had always assumed that the culture and childhood of a Kurdish woman would be very different from those of a Dutch or European woman. I was born in Sulaymaniyah, spent my childhood there, and later moved to Erbil. I have lived between these two cities for most of my life. Yet, despite these very different backgrounds, I discovered that women from the Netherlands, France, and many other countries often experience the same pain, challenges, and struggles.”

She added that many women at the performance told her that these experiences are universal. “This is not specifically Kurdish pain, but something shared by women across the world. This realization was new to me, and perhaps the most profound thing I took away from the experience.”

Jaff told Kurdistan Chronicle that she hopes now that people in the West — beyond the Kurdish community — will discover the remarkable talent that exists among the Kurdish people.

“I hope that the power of our words, our music, our colors, and our art will reach wider audiences and cross cultural boundaries. Art has the unique ability to connect people across languages, histories, and cultures. Through this experience, I was reminded that while our backgrounds may differ, our emotions often bring us together. I believe Kurdish artists have stories, voices, and visions that deserve to be heard, seen, and celebrated around the world,” she concluded.